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that she would give it up some day in favor of marriage and family. She makes clear “how hard it is for a woman to feel the freedom that could let her develop as a writer, even if she has it” (p. 52). Kathleen Fraser also helps us to understand the experience of the woman poet in her essay “On being a West Coast Woman Poet.”²² Fraser grew up in the west and then went off “to the highly polished surfaces and honed edges of New York City . . . to learn to control myself.” She explains that “the main message” she had received from men teachers in college was that “my poems were embarrassing in their directness and not formal enough. One man drew a wheel and lectured me about the spokes and how they must connect to the rim. Some of my spokes were obviously missing” (p. 3). Fraser’s essay articulates the conflict of the woman poet who would express her own experience but knows that “good poetry” is defined by men—in this case by the eastern critical establishment.

This brief survey indicates that there is much work afoot in women’s poetry. (And certainly there is even more since I wrote this review.) We are much closer to an overall view of women’s novelistic tradition than we are to a sense of women’s poetry, and thus it will be some time before we have the perspective to make final judgments of this new research. At the present moment, we can be encouraged by the sheer amount of work being done and hope that Modern Language Association seminars, new books and journal articles, as well as reviews such as this one will help to bring together scholars of similar interests, working to define the particular character and excellence of poetry by American women.

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On the Term “Sex Roles”

Helena Z. Lopata and Barrie Thorne

Catharine Stimpson asked me to expand on my discomfort with the use of the term (I cannot call it a concept) “sex roles” to label the area of research and writing dealing with the influence of gender assignment on a person and her/his relations with others. The discomfort is mentioned in my review essay in the Autumn 1976 issue of *Signs*,¹ but it has a long history, and there are many others who find the term sociologically illogical. There was a long discussion of it, initiated by Pepper Schwartz, in our theoretical and methodological session of the International Work-

22. Fraser’s paper was first delivered at the 1976 Modern Language Association seminar on women’s poetry and will be published in the previously mentioned issue of *Women’s Studies* (n. 8 above).

1. Helena Znaniecki Lopata, “Review Essay: Sociology,” *Signs* 2 (1976): 165–76.

shop on Changing Sex Roles in Family and Society in Dubrovnik in 1975. Rita Simon, who is general editor for a series of annuals put out by Johnson Publications, asked me to edit one such series on "Sex Roles and Kinship," and I begged for a change of title to "The Interweave of Social Roles: Women and Men in Kinship and Society." Members of the recently created "Sex Roles" section of the American Sociological Association have been engaged in extensive discussions over the problems with this term, and Barrie Thorne volunteered to write up some of the arguments against its use.² They are extensive.

1. Role terminology is not fully applicable to gender. Gender, or learned behavior differentiated along the lines of biological sex,³ is not a role in the same sense that being a teacher, sister, or friend is a role. Gender, like race or age, is deeper, less changeable, and infuses the more specific roles one plays; thus, a female teacher differs from a male teacher in important sociological respects (e.g., she is likely to receive less pay, status, and credibility). This distinction has occasionally been acknowledged by defining gender as a "basic role,"⁴ an "unfocused role,"⁵ or a "diffuse status characteristic."⁶ But "sex roles" terminology is often used unreflectively and involves questionable assumptions.

2. "Sex roles" terminology tends to mask questions of power and inequality. The notion of "role" has tended to focus attention more on individuals than on social strata, more on socialization than on social structure, and has thereby deflected attention away from historic, economic, and political questions.⁷ "Sex roles" suggests a "separate but equal" sort of conceptualization, perhaps one reason "race roles" and "class roles" never entered sociological discourse (it has taken longer for sociologists to acknowledge sexism than to acknowledge inequalities of race and class).

3. It is significant that sociologists do not use the terms "race roles" or "class roles." It might be worthwhile to compare the evolution of concepts used in the sociological study of class, race, and gender. In the study of gender, the possibilities of sexual double entendre haunt the search for concepts; for example, "sex relations" risks misunderstanding

2. A somewhat different version of these comments appeared in the *Newsletter* of the American Sociological Association Sex Roles Section (Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association, n.d.).

3. David Tresemer, "Assumptions about Gender Roles," in *Another Voice*, ed. M. Millman and R. M. Kanter (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1975), pp. 308-39.

4. Michael Banton, *Roles* (New York: Basic Books, 1965).

5. Shirley Angrist, "The Study of Sex Roles," *Journal of Social Issues* 25 (1969): 215-31.

6. Joseph Berger, Bernard P. Cohen, and Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Status Conceptions and Social Interaction," *American Sociological Review* 37 (1972): 241-55.

7. Ann Battle-Sister, "Book Review," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 33 (1971): 592-97; Elizabeth Benson, "Dual Career Families: Alternative Research Approaches," unpublished paper (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1972); and Jessie Bernard, *Women, Wives, Mothers: Values and Options* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1975), chap. 1.

while “race relations” does not. The term “sex role” does have the virtue of affirming that one’s focus is learned, cultural, and social behavior and not the biological or more narrowly sexual aspects of female and male. “Sex roles” also suggests a social as opposed to psychological approach (a distinction Stoller makes in contrasting “gender role” with “gender identity”).⁸

4. Much of sex roles literature is fraught with reification. “Sex roles,” “sex role stereotyping,” and “sex role socialization” are often written and talked about as if they exist concretely rather than being analytic constructs.

* * *

I have a few additional comments. The most useful definition of social roles, which enables me to work comparatively with a great range of such relations, is, not surprisingly, Znaniecki’s.⁹ According to his formulation, a social role is a set of functionally interdependent, culturally patterned relations involving duties and personal rights between a social person and a social circle.¹⁰ Thus, it is not a set of expectations but of relations, the culture providing the base for the role by defining who should or should not be assigned or allowed to enter a specific role in a specific social circle and what duties and rights are “normally” needed in order that the function of the role (again culturally defined) be carried forth. An American woman enters the role of mother when she develops, after acknowledging birth, adoption, or fostering, relations not only with a child but with a wide range of members of the circle in order to care for and rear that child. The circle may contain a father, a pediatrician, other children she is mothering, friends of her child, her family of orientation and in-laws who relate to her in a specific way because she is the mother of that child, school teachers, etc.

The problem with the term “sex role” is that there is no such thing. As far as I can tell, there is no patterned set of relations whose only function is somehow restricted to the one characteristic of a social person of being a man or a woman. Gender identification pushes, pulls, encourages, or discourages entrance into functionally organized social roles, such as call girl, father, engineer, etc. The selection of roles as appropriate to men or women is based on the cultural image of the ideal or normal set of characteristics needed to perform that role and on the circle’s willingness to accept a candidate with or without the normative characteristics. For example, engineers are pictured as men in America,

8. Robert Stoller, *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (New York: Science House, 1968).

9. Florian Znaniecki, *Social Relations and Social Roles* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965).

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 201–6.

women in Poland. Gender identification may also modify the duties and the rights within a role, as in all social roles which have dual or more extensive subdivisions. That is, the cultural base and social circles may demand that a woman perform the duties of a role differently than does a man. They may offer different personal rights, as in the case when women and men are paid differently for doing the same thing.

The point I am making here is that I cannot locate a sex role, or even a gender role, seeing only the influence, more or less pervasive, of gender identification and self-identity upon the social roles selected and entered into by men and women and upon the relations with members of the social circles of these roles. It seems to be that being a woman is not a social role but a pervasive identity and a set of self-feelings which lead to the selection or the assignment by others of social roles and to the performance by women of common roles in some ways differently from men.

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**Comment on Naomi Goldenberg's "A Feminist Critique
of Jung" (vol. 2, no. 2)**

Barbara E. Chesser

What is set forth as critique is character assassination of Jung as sexist and racist. Quotes are taken out of context. There is misapprehension or misrepresentation of basic concepts, for example, the archetype, the animus/anima, the difference between the individual and collective unconscious, and the implications inherent in the fact that these originate not in metaphysical deductions about the human mind but in empirical observations of psychobiological phenomena. Jung has often been attacked by those ill equipped to deal with the biological considerations fundamental to his thought. Misconstruction here is so complete it cannot be discussed profitably. A paragraph, with my inserted comments, at random:

To Jungians the anima, the animus, and their verbal handmaidens Eros and Logos are "archetypes," by definition, what is unchanging and unchangeable. [Eros and Logos are not archetypes—psychoid structures which cannot become conscious—but manifestations of